

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph at page 14, line 5 to page 15, line 2 with clean non-fax text as follows (with new amendment):

Fig. 1 also shows that each of the journal bolts 3 and 4 is journalled in a respective tensioning lever 18, 19 of the tensioning assembly that includes the locking mechanism 15 or 16 for locking the tensioning levers in a tensioned position. The locking mechanism 16 shown in Fig. 2 is of identical construction as the locking mechanism 15. Therefore only one of these locking mechanisms will be described in detail. Each tensioning assembly with its locking mechanism 15 or 16 comprises a mounting 17 carrying two hinge blocks 17' and 17" as seen in Fig. 1. The mounting 17 has a curvature and radially inwardly facing contour fitting into the radially outwardly facing groove or contour G formed in the clamping elements 5 shown in Fig. 3, whereby the mounting 17 helps spacing the straps 1 and 2 axially from each other. The mounting 17 and its hinge blocks 17', 17" also fit between the axial end flanges of the interface rings 9, 10. The above mentioned two tensioning levers 18 and 19 are spaced from each other circumferentially and are hinged to the hinge blocks 17' and 17", respectively. A hinge pin 21 hinges a first end 18' of the tensioning lever 18 to the hinge block 17'. A second hinge pin 21' hinges a first end 19' of the tensioning lever 19 to the hinge block 17". The mounting 17, the tensioning levers 18 and 19, the locking mechanism

15, the hinge blocks 17', 17" and the hinge pins 21, 21' form together form the main components of the tensioning assembly.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 15, lines 3 to 18** with clean non-fax text as follows (no amendment):

Figs. 4, 5 and 6 illustrate one embodiment of the present invention. The eyes 1' and 2' of the tensioning members 1 and 2 are journaled to the tensioning lever 18 by the same journal bolt 3. The eyes 1" and 2" at the opposite ends of the straps 1, 2 are journaled to the tensioning lever 19 by the journal bolt 4 as shown in Fig. 1 but not in Fig. 4. The tensioning levers 18 and 19 are spaced from each other in the circumferential direction along the mounting 17. Only the tensioning lever 18 will be described in detail. The tensioning lever 19 is of the same mirror symmetrical construction relative to the lever 18. Each tensioning lever 18, 19 includes a rectangular frame 20 hinged by the hinge pins 21, 21' to the hinge blocks 17', 17" as mentioned above. The hinge blocks 17' and 17" are fixed to the mounting 17 as shown in Fig. 1. The journal bolts 3 and 4 and the hinge pins 21 and 21' extend in parallel to each other and to the longitudinal central axis.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 15, line 19 to page 16, line 18** with clean non-fax text as follows (with new amendment):

The opposite, free end of each frame 20 of the tensioning levers 18, 19 has a drilling in which a tensioning screw 22

is received. A threaded end of the tensioning screw 22 extends out of the frame 20. The threading is of sufficient length along the tensioning screw to accommodate a tension nut 22' which moves the tensioning screw 22 relative to the frame 20 in an adjusted tensioned position. The inner end of the tensioning screw 22 is rotatably secured and connected by an end thread to a guide block 23 for adjusting the position of the guide block 23 lengthwise within the frame 20 of the tensioning lever 18. The frame 20 has in its upwardly and downwardly facing frame side sections elongated holes 24 through which the journal bolt 3 extends into and through the guide block 23 which is slidable back and forth in the frame 20 in response to operating the tensioning screw 22. Further the ends of the journal bolt 3, 4 stick out upwardly and downwardly of the frame 20 into the respective eyes 1' and 2', and 1" and 2", respectively. As seen in Fig. 6 the frame 20 carries a locking bail 25 for locking the tensioning lever 18, 19 in a tensioned position which will be described below. When the ~~counter~~ tension nut 22' is ~~loosened~~ loosened, the position of the guide block 23 shown in Fig. 4 can be adjusted within the frame 20 to tension the tensioning members 1 and 2 since the journal pins 3, 4 pass through the guide block 23 and can move back and forth along the elongated guide holes 24 of the frame 20 when the guide block 23 moves back and forth in the frame 20 in response to an adjustment of the screw 22.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 18, lin 17 to page 19, lin 5** with clean non-fax text as follows (no amendment):

Figs. 4 and 5 show the present system after the tensioning levers 18, 19 have been rotated into the tensioned and locked position and after the retarding leaf spring elements 34, 35 have been installed as described above. The motion of the tensioning levers 18, 19 into the tensioned and locked position causes the tensioning members 1, 2 to move the clamping elements 5 radially inwardly. This rotating motion of the levers 18, 19 about the hinge pins 21 substantially closes the clamping mechanism so that any remaining closing distance is short. Thus, the remaining closing distance that must still be closed or removed for a complete tightening, can be easily removed by operating the adjustment screws 22 by tightening the tension nuts 22' when the clamping mechanism has been completely tightened. In this completely closed position the locking bails 25 are arrested by the respective locking bar 26.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 19, lines 6 to 13** with clean non-fax text as follows (no amendment):

The present clamping mechanism is opened, e.g. when the rocket and payload has reached the predetermined position or orbit by releasing the locking bar 26 as described in more detail in the above mentioned US Patent 6,588,968 B2, for example by an electromagnetic release mechanism which controls the motion of the locking member 28, whereby the

dissipation of the energy stored in the clamping mechanism takes place in a controlled and delayed or timed manner.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 19, lines 14 to 17** with clean non-fax text as follows (no amendment):

According to the invention the timed release of the clamping mechanism is further delayed or retarded by the retarding elements shown as leaf springs 34, 35 in Figs. 4, 5 and 6, and as spiral or helical springs in Figs. 7 and 8.

Please replace the paragraph at **page 19, line 18 to page 20, line 2** with clean non-fax text as follows (with new amendment):

Fig. 5 shows ~~as a~~ spacing "b" between the retarding leaf springs 34, 35 and the respective contact pin 37. The retarding or slowing down of the opening motion of the tensioning levers 18, 19 begins as soon as the contact pins 37 bear against the respective retarding leaf spring 34, 35. As the opening motion continues, the pins 37 slide along the leaf springs thereby elastically deforming the springs which generate a counter moment against the opening moment or rather opening torque of the tensioning levers 18, 19 whereby a controlled slowdown of the opening motion is achieved.

[AMENDMENT CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE]